

File with Mayaguez

UNCLASSIFIED
With Secret Enclosures

*post-mortem
unit*

Honorable John Sparkman
Chairman, Committee on
Foreign Relations
United States Senate

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Thank you for your letter of July 30 requesting material for the Committee's review of the Mayaguez affair. I am please to provide the following in response to each request as indicated below.

1. A detailed Chronology of all events related to the Mayaguez Affair of which the Department of State has knowledge.

Enclosed is a "Chronology of Events of the Mayaguez Incident."

2. A copy of all situation reports prepared by the Department of State during the incident.

Enclosed are copies of the "Mayaguez Situation Reports" of the Department's Mayaguez Working Group which are classified SECRET.

3. A detailed description of U.S. diplomatic efforts to obtain information regarding the ship and crew, or to obtain their release.

On Monday, May 12 shortly after the NSC meeting and the White House statement demanding the immediate release of the ship, the Department requested the Head of the Chinese Liaison Office here in Washington to call at the Department. The meeting took place at 4:30 p.m. When the Chinese refused to accept a message to the Cambodians demanding the release of the crew and ship, we instructed our Liaison Office in Peking that same day to pass the message to the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs there as well as directly to the Cambodian diplomatic mission in Peking. We had received no reply by the end of the second day (Tuesday, May 13) at which time the first military

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2.

operations began. These operations were directed at Cambodian patrol boats that were trying to transit between the Mayaguez, the Cambodian mainland and Koh Tang Island.

The next morning, Wednesday, May 14 (about 7:15 a.m., EDT), we learned that the Chinese authorities in Peking had returned undelivered to our Liaison Office in Peking our message to the Cambodians. We still had received no response to the message we delivered directly to the Cambodians in Peking. Shortly after midday on May 14, we delivered a letter to UN Secretary General Waldheim concerning the action requesting him to take steps to bring about the safe return of the Mayaguez and crew.

On the evening of May 14, we informed a number of Embassies here in Washington, and the UN Security Council, that we were taking certain military actions to secure release of the Mayaguez and its crew.

A Cambodian domestic broadcast indicating that the Mayaguez would be ordered to withdraw from Cambodian territorial waters but which made no mention of the disposition of the crew was received in Washington shortly after 8:00 p.m. on Wednesday, May 14.

After learning of this message, we announced that as soon as the Cambodian authorities would issue a statement that they were prepared to release the crew members unconditionally and immediately, we would promptly cease military operations. The Cambodian authorities did not issue any such statement. We were not certain that the Cambodians had in fact released the entire crew until some three hours after receiving the domestic broadcast.

Still later that night we learned that the message we had delivered to the Cambodians in Peking had been routinely sent back through the mail.

I am also pleased to provide you a copy of a recent statement made by Acting Secretary Ingersoll in open session before the Subcommittee on International Political and Military Affairs of the House International Relations Committee, a letter from me to the Chairman of the House International Relations Committee on June 10 and a letter from me to Senator Brooke on June 20.

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If I can be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to write.

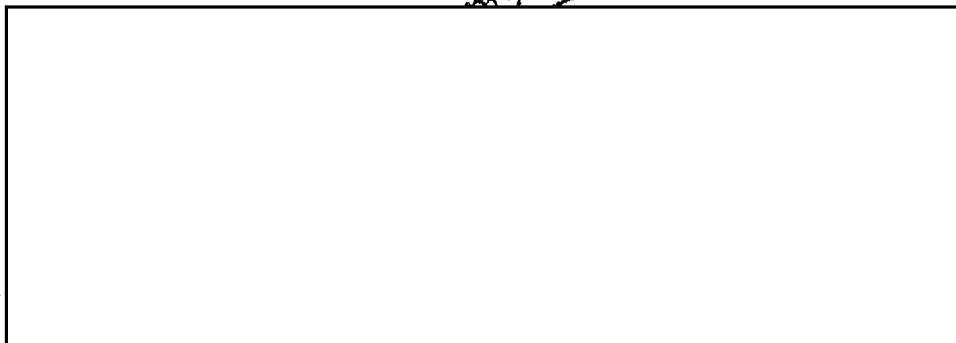
Sincerely,

Robert J. McCloskey
Assistant Secretary for
Congressional Relations

Enclosures:

As stated

STAT



STAT

NOTE: has no objection to showing distribution on situation reports.

Courier

TRANSMITTED BY:
(Date & Time Stamp)

RECEIVED BY:
(Date & Time Stamp)

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Operations Center

~~LDX MESSAGE RECEIPT~~

~~S/S~~

LDX MESSAGE NO. _____, CLASSIFICATION SECRET, NO. PAGES 13

DESCRIPTION OF MSG. Chronology & Sitreps on Mayaguez affair

FROM:

[Redacted Box]

STAT

Officer

Office Symbol

Extension

Room Number

LDX TO:

DELIVER TO:

EXTENSION:

ROOM NUMBER:

CIA

[Redacted Box]
Counsel

Legislative

_____, _____, _____, _____
_____, _____, _____, _____
_____, _____, _____, _____
_____, _____, _____, _____

FOR:

CLEARANCE ☐

INFORMATION ☒

PER REQUEST ☐

COMMENT ☐

REMARKS:

VALIDATED FOR TRANSMISSION BY:

Executive Secretariat Officer

May 12

- 3:18 a.m. Mr. John Neal of the Delta Exploration Co. in Jakarta, Indonesia received a Mayday call from the Mayaguez. Messages stated "Have been fired upon and boarded by Cambodian armed forces at 9 degrees 48 minutes north/ 102 degrees 53 minutes east. Ship is being towed to unknown Cambodian port."
- 4:00 a.m. Mr. Neal lost communication with the ship, gave up to trying to reach the ship and informed the U.S.
- 5:00 a.m. Embassy in Jakarta of the incident.
- 5:02 a.m. U.S. Embassy in Jakarta informed Washington of the incident.
- 7:30 a.m. Pentagon orders CINCPAC to send reconnaissance aircraft to find ship.
- 9:57 a.m. U.S. reconnaissance aircraft were dispatched to the area to attempt to locate the ship and verify the report.
- 12:05 p.m. The President chaired a meeting of the National Security Council.
- 1:50 p.m. White House press briefing and statement concerning seizure of the ship and U.S. demands for its release.
- 4:30 p.m. A representative of the Liaison Office of the People's Republic of China summoned to the State Department was given a message for the Cambodian authorities, demanding the release of the ship. The PRC representative refused to accept the message.
- 9:16 p.m. U.S. reconnaissance aircraft made a positive identification of the ship and observed it being escorted by Cambodian gunboats. The aircraft was fired at and hit, sustaining minor damage.

May 13

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- 12:10 a.m. A representative of the United States Liaison Office in Peking delivered a message to the Cambodian Embassy there. A message was also delivered to the Foreign Ministry of the People's Republic of China.
- 1:25 a.m. U.S. reconnaissance aircraft observed the Mayaguez anchoring one nautical mile north of Koh Tang Island. The aircraft was fired at but not hit.
- 6:04 a.m. The Mayaguez crew was observed being transferred from the ship.
- 6:18 a.m. The Pentagon ordered the Air Force to maintain surveillance of the Mayaguez and prevent its movement into port on the Cambodian mainland. Warning shots were fired across bow of Mayaguez to signal it not to move. Specific orders were given not to attack the Cambodian gunboats.
- 6:54 a.m. White House press briefing on location of ship and U.S. surveillance effort.
- 7:35 a.m. The crew is observed on the island but it cannot be ascertained how many men have been moved. Therefore, it is not certain that the entire crew has left the ship.
- 3:05 p.m. A C-130 aircraft received small arms fire from the island.
- 3:20 p.m. Four Cambodian gunboats at island fired anti-aircraft weapons at C-130.
- 5:50 p.m. Congressional leadership contacted by telephone
to and advised that President had directed military
6:35 p.m. actions to prevent the Mayaguez and its crew from
being transferred to the Cambodian mainland and to
prevent reinforcement from the mainland of
Cambodian forces detaining the Mayaguez vessel and
crew.

- 7:04 p.m. Three patrol boats move from the island. Warning fire from USAF planes turns them back to Koh Tang.
- 9:43 p.m. Cambodian patrol boat ignores warning fire from U.S. aircraft and continues to move. Boat is attacked and set afire.
- 9:52 p.m. Patrol boat spotted with possible crew members on it. U.S. aircraft fires in front of it in order to turn it back. Boat continues to move toward the mainland.
- 10:03 p.m. A different patrol boat moves and is engaged and set afire by air strikes.
- 10:40 p.m. The President chaired a meeting of the National Security Council.
- 11:00 p.m. The vessel believed to be carrying crew members reaches the mainland.

May 14

- 12:29 a.m. Three other patrol boats are engaged by U.S. aircraft. One is sunk, other two damaged. A subsequent strike damages two other patrol boats.
- 7:15 a.m. U.S. Liaison Office in Peking reported that PRC Foreign Ministry returned the message for the Cambodian authorities.
- 11:00 a.m. USS Harold E. Holt arrives in the area.

11:00 a.m. Approved For Release 2005/01/05 : CIA-RDP79R01142A000600060004-3
that three Cambodian boats had been sunk and four damaged by U.S. air strikes.

11:50 a.m. DOD press briefing and statement about U.S. attacks on Cambodian boats.

1:00 p.m. A letter regarding this action was delivered to
to UN Secretary General Waldheim by Ambassador Scali,
2:00 p.m. requesting UN Secretary General to take any steps
in his ability to secure safe return of Mayaguez and crew.

3:00 p.m. State Department officials briefed members of the
to House International Relations Committee, Senate
5:00 p.m. Foreign Relations Committee and House Armed Services Committee.

3:52 p.m. President chairs NSC meeting in the Cabinet Room.

4:45 p.m. Orders are issued to begin the military operations
to for the recovery of the SS Mayaguez and crew includ-
5:10 p.m. ing air attacks against military facilities near
Kompong Som to prevent reinforcement and support
from the mainland for Cambodian forces detaining the ship and its crew.

5:14 p.m. U.S. assault forces take off from stations.
to
5:20 p.m.

6:40 p.m. President meets with Congressional leadership to
to inform them of the actions he has ordered to
7:40 p.m. recover the ship and the crew.

7:00 p.m. Marine assault force arrives at USS Holt.

7:07 p.m. Phnom Penh domestic radio service carries a broad-
cast in Cambodian that states that the Cambodian
Government will order the Mayaguez to withdraw
from Cambodian territorial waters. No mention is
made of the crew.

7:09 p.m. Assault force arrives at Koh Tang Island and comes
under fire.

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7:15 p.m. A helicopter in the assault force against Koh Tang Island is hit and downed.

7:45 p.m. Another helicopter crashes on the island.

7:46 p.m. Approximately 100 Marines are on Koh Tang Island.

8:06 p.m. The Cambodian broadcast, monitored by the Foreign Broadcast Information Service and translated into English, was carried on the FBIS wire.

8:15 p.m. Insertion of the first assault wave on Koh Tang Island was completed, 135 Marines now on beach.

8:15 p.m. The President is informed of the FBIS wire report by Secretary Kissinger.

8:30 p.m. White House press briefing and statement on the actions ordered by the President.

8:45 p.m. Support aircraft arrive and commence operations against military installations near Kompong Som.

9:05 p.m. Marines from the USS Holt board and take control of the SS Mayaguez. They find evidence that the vessel had been occupied until just before their arrival.

9:15 p.m. White House issued press release on message being sent to Cambodian authorities offering to stop military operations if crew is released.

9:33 p.m. Mayaguez is secured and U.S. colors are raised.

10:23 p.m. A boat was reported near Koh Tang Island flying a white flag.

11:07 p.m. The USS Wilson takes aboard the occupants of that boat. The occupants were determined to be the entire crew of the SS Mayaguez.

11:16 p.m. The order was given to cease all offensive operations and begin to withdraw. The Commander of the forces on the island requests additional ground forces to provide security for a successful withdrawal.

- 11:31 p.m. White House statement on recovery of ship.
- 11:45 p.m. The additional ground security forces arrive at Koh Tang Island.

May 15

- 12:10 a.m. Airstrikes at Kompong Som terminate.
- 12:25 a.m. The Mayaguez crew is returned to its vessel.
- 12:30 a.m. The President's statement on recovery of ship and crew.
- 12:45 a.m. DOD press briefing on military actions.
- 1:21 a.m. A helicopter is hit during effort to remove troops from the island.
- 2:00 a.m. A report consistent with the War Powers Resolution from the President was transmitted to
- 2:30 a.m. to Speaker of the House and to President Pro Tempore of the Senate.
- 4:40 a.m. Mayaguez underway.
- 6:15 a.m. Commencement of operation to evacuate last elements of marines on Koh Tang Island using helicopters and USS Wilson and USS Holt.
- 7:17 a.m. Final extraction of U.S. ground forces completed.
- 12:21 p.m. Last aircraft departed the area.

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MAYAGUEZ SITUATION REPORT
1900

Eastern Daylight Time

May 13, 1975

- A helicopter transporting Air Police from North Thailand crashed killing all 23 Americans aboard. The 19 Air Police were destined for Utapac for the Mayaguez operation.
- Reuters reported that in Paris Chinese Deputy Premier Teng Hsiao Peng, after meeting the French President, told reporters about the Mayaguez affair, "If the United States intervenes, there is nothing we can do."
- A USAF C-130 fired near a Cambodian patrol craft in the vicinity of the Mayaguez to keep it from moving out of the area. The patrol craft kept on and arrived at the Island of Koh Tang. The Mayaguez is apparently not moving.
- Congressman Jones of Oklahoma called to say that one of his constituents had given him a very derogatory character report on the Mayaguez Captain Charles T. Miller. The constituent said that he thought Miller might have made a deal with the KC to turn over the boat in turn for a payoff.

SECRET

MAYAGUEZ SITUATION REPORT
0700

Eastern Daylight Time
May 14, 1975

- Following earlier unsuccessful efforts to inhibit the movement of Cambodian patrol craft in the vicinity of the Mayaguez by firing warning shots in front of the vessels, US aircraft were directed to fire on one patrol craft moving in the area and it was sunk about 2000 May 13. A raft containing several survivors was spotted and an attempt to pick them up was initiated. About 2400 May 13 the JCS authorized US planes to attack and sink small craft in the vicinity of Koh Tang island. During the next few hours several small boats and gunboats were attacked with two of the gunboats sunk. US aircraft were fired upon at least twice but reported no damage sustained.
- A fishing boat with 30 - 40 passengers, some of whom may have been caucasians, arrived from Koh Tang island on the Cambodian mainland at about 2300 May 13.
- In anticipation of Diet and press queries regarding the movement of US Marines out of Okinawa, the Japanese Foreign Ministry has requested further information regarding this move. They have also requested our approval for the GOJ spokesman to respond to queries that the GOJ was informed of the movement in advance and that the USG had assured Japan these actions do not violate our undertakings in the Security Treaty pertaining to the use of bases in Japan.
- In a May 14 press conference, which occurred before the appearance of news reports of the arrival of US Marines at U-Tapao, Thai Prime Minister Khukrit declared that his government would protest any such introduction of US forces in connection with the Mayaguez incident. Khukrit was quoted by Reuters as saying that if the US took such action, "We cannot be friends with the US any more... This may reach the stage of suspension of association." Embassy Bangkok has confirmed the substance of Khukrit's comments to the press and reports that the Prime Minister had called in our charge at 1545 local time (0445 EDT). A late wire service report indicates that at the meeting, Khukrit would protest the Marines' arrival.

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MAYAGUEZ SITUATION REPORT

1200

EASTERN DAYLIGHT TIME

May 14, 1975

Thai Protest Marine Deployment - RTG Prime Minister Khukrit Pramot, acting also as Foreign Minister, summoned our Charge in Bangkok to present an aide memoire today protesting the deployment of US Marines to Thailand. The operative portion of the memoire (BK 8771) reads: "The Thai Government considers that this action by the United States Government is not consistent with the goodwill existing between Thailand and the United States, and unless these forces which have entered against the wishes of the Thai Government are withdrawn immediately, the good relations and cooperation existing between Thailand and the United States would be exposed to serious and damaging consequences."

News of this action was immediately released to the press by the RTG, and some accounts indicated that Khukrit's attitude was more extreme than implied by the note. The Charge, however, reports (BK 8772) that Khukrit was not unfriendly and "obviously pained by the position US actions have put him in."

Situation on the Scene - The SS Mayaguez is dead in the water and sensory surveillance shows that its stacks are dead. The disposition of the crew is unknown, although there is speculation that attempts may have been made to move at least some of them from the ship. Since authorization was issued after the NSC meeting last night for interdiction fire, three Cambodian gunboats have been sunk by our aircraft. There is occasional AAA fire from Koh Tang and nearby islands, but otherwise the scene is calm.

The MS Hirado, a refrigerator cargo vessel of Swedish registry, was reportedly attacked and shot at by a patrol boat today. The incident occurred about 12 miles southwest of Panjang Island, which is approximately 20 miles south of Koh Tang.

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Ambassador Whitehouse Arrives Amidst Protests --

Ambassador designate Charles S. Whitehouse arrived in Bangkok today and was met by about 50 protesting Thai students, reportedly carrying such signs as "bastard Ford, get your troops out" and "U.S. go home". It is not anticipated that Ambassador Whitehouse will be able to present his credentials to the King until the end of the month.

Senator Goldwater Says Some Crew Ashore - Citing

Admiral Gayler as his source, Senator Barry Goldwater reportedly told a fund-raising dinner in Atlanta last night that some crew members of the Mayaguez have been taken ashore. Adding that he was "privy to information that should not be revealed", the Senator refused to elaborate. At least one of the crew is a constituent of Representative Les Aspin, and we have received inquiry from his office.

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SECRET

MAYAGUEZ SITUATION REPORT

AS OF 1900

EASTERN DAYLIGHT TIME

May 14, 1975

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EA/P

Situation on the Scene: We are advised that Marine combat operations against the Mayaguez and Koh Tang Island will commence at about 1915 our time. At 1900 there were still no definitive reports concerning the disposition of the Mayaguez crew. US Aircraft sank one more and possibly two Cambodian gunboats near the ship circa 1300 EDT. Other Cambodian craft remained in the general area. The destroyer escort USS Holt was on station in sight of the Mayaguez but had as yet taken no reported action. UPI cited "Pentagon sources" as asserting that the Holt "might try to tow the freighter away if the coast is clear." The Swedish ship Hirado, attacked by Cambodian craft earlier today, was apparently underway, but its condition unknown. A Panamanian flag vessel was also reportedly fired on and stopped by Cambodians today in nearby waters, but subsequently released.

LDX:

WH

CIA

DOD

NSA

Congressional Interest: DOD Spokesman Laitin's announcement on the sinking of the Cambodian gunboats apparently stimulated concerted Congressional interest. Shortly thereafter the Working Group began receiving telephone inquiries from the Hill, which totalled over two dozen in an eight-hour period (with only one incoming telephone line available). We understand that ☐ received similarly heavy traffic. Although a few calls concerned specifics on crew thought to be constituents, most were of a general nature along the lines of "are we going to war?"

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SECRET

MAYAGUEZ SITUATION REPORT
AS OF 0700
EASTERN DAYLIGHT TIME

May 15, 1975

DIST:

S-3 The entire crew of 40 from the Mayaguez has been
S/S-4 recovered and is said to be in excellent condition.
S/S-O-2 The crew is back on the ship which is under way
D under its own power.

P
M There are 213 marines in the Ground Security
C Force on Koh Tang island awaiting extraction. They
S/AM are still coming under ground fire. Early reports
S/P stated that one marine had been killed and eight
L wounded on the ground.

PH
INR In addition four helicopters were reportedly
IO downed, three in the area and one in Thailand,
X/PRS with unknown casualties.

MR
EA According to press reports of Secretary
EA/LC Schlesinger's press conference, the air strike at
EA/EB Rong on the Cambodian mainland destroyed 17 air-
EA/P craft on the ground.

LDX: The press also reported that the Thai foreign
 ministry spokesman stated that US Charge Masters
WH told the RTG that US marines would be withdrawn
CIA as soon as possible.
DOD
NSA

SECRET
GDS

SECRET

MAYAGUEZ SITUATION REPORT
AS OF 1100
EASTERN DAYLIGHT TIME

May 15, 1975

DIST:

The Mayaguez is under way under its own power and under its own crew. It is heading for Singapore.

USSAG's 151400Z reported that all personnel had been extracted from Koh Tang. USSAG's 151445Z recommended that Mayaguez recovery operations be terminated.

EA directed at 1100 EDT that the Mayaguez Informal Working Group be disestablished.

This will be the last situation report on this incident.

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